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Housekeepers' Chat

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Subject: "Art in the Home." Talk written by Mrs. Zenobia Ness, Instructor in Applied Art, Iowa State College.

Bulletin available: "Curtaining the Home."

--ooOoo--

Would you like to play a game of make-believe this morning? Let's pretend that we have an empty room, with four bare walls, to furnish just as we please. Of course we'll want to make it as artistic as possible. Suppose we call on Mrs. Zenobia Ness, of Iowa State College, to help us. Mrs. Ness has made a special study of interior decorating.

Here is our room, Mrs. Ness -- an empty room, with four bare walls. Will you tell us how to make it artistic, and beautiful?

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We will use the tonal arrangement of the out-of-doors, suggests Mrs. Ness with the ceiling corresponding to the sky above; the side walls to the horizon line, and the floor to the earth beneath. Hence, the ceiling will be the lightest note, giving the effect of staying up; the walls, the next step deeper in value, to give the effect of staying back; and the floor, deepest in value, to give the effect of staying down. In all our selections, of paper, paint, and rugs, we should remember that the ceiling must stay up, the walls must stay back, and the floor must stay down.

Paint on walls is easy to keep a neutral tone; paper may be equally harmonious, provided we avoid too much pattern. Large figured paper advances into the room to meet you; as also do series of spots, just daring you to count them.

Shall we have pictures? How can they tell their story, with paper, rugs, curtains, davenport, all shouting loudly for attention? We must decide between a muchly figured paper, and other things in our room. Only one story can be told at one time, and make itself heard. So what are we telling, and who shall tell it? Paper and rugs, or a good picture, and you?

A two-toned, indistinct paper, like a plain wall, gives a feeling of spaciousness. Stripes make a ceiling appear higher, just as stripes are kind to the short, stout lady, making her appear taller. So, in a low-ceiling room, stripes may be used to advantage.

If our woodwork is natural oak, and we cannot change it, we must stay to the warm tones in our wall colors -- in a value a little lighter than the general tone of the casings. All colors look better against a warm grey or



or putty-colored background. We, ourselves, show off better against a warm background instead of a cool grey. Sallow persons should never wear cool grey -- none of us who have lost our first youth.

Dark woodwork calls for a darker value throughout our whole furnishing scheme. Of course, painted woodwork is ideal in cream, old ivory, putty, warm grey --- but never in white.

We will next consider floors. Small rugs should always be laid parallel with your structural room dimensions -- as should also all articles of furniture except those that are built to entirely fill a corner. It is the yawning space behind that is more objectionable.

Avoid too much pattern, in rugs as well as in wall paper. We must remember that it is the floor that must be deepest value, so it will stay down, and give a feeling of stability. Large patterns and loud colors come up to meet us, saying "look at me."

Now -- about the windows. Glass curtains are those of thin net or marquisette, or voile or theatrical gauze, that are hung next to the glass, to insure privacy. Use glass curtains only where they are necessary. If your window frames a beautiful view across country, a lovely tree, or an attractive garden, please leave it, and use drapery only, omitting the glass curtains.

The type of material used in the drapery seems to set the standard for the room. Cretonnes, printed linens, crashes, etc., lend the domestic air; damasks and velours spell formality, while imitation silks and near-velvets shout that social climbers live here. If we have kept our walls and floors quiet, we may express our love of color in our draperies, but I would admonish you to take home a length and try it, to see if you could live with it, or whether it would chatter too much.

The number of windows in the room, and whether or not they are grouped, or well spaced, will determine to a large extent how they should be treated. I know a room, all cut up with single windows, that could have but one treatment -- and that is casement cloth as nearly the value and color of the walls as possible, so as to attract to itself the smallest amount of attention. Groups of windows are usually treated as one window.

The sun-room is usually given an informal treatment. Here, color may have full sway, as also in the kitchen. The vogue for color has taken complete possession of the kitchen, and we gayly paint the inside of our cupboards and closets, have our shades made of the new bright oil cloths, have our pots and pans alluring in jade green, blue, orange, or yellow. Even the stoves, decked in matching or contrasting hues, have joined <sup>in</sup> the dance.

But we must come back to furniture. The reclaimed pieces of our ancestors are again holding up their heads, with all the dignity of yore. It is quite the smart thing to have antiques, and their quest has all the thrill of a game of chance. But just one word of caution. Buy or keep nothing, simply because it is old, unless it be good in line, and pleasing in design.





Good reproductions of period furniture abound in the shops. There may be combinations of periods, and also of woods, used harmoniously together in the same room. But, beware of suites, and of too many large overstuffed pieces. Here again it is well to remember: "Avoid too much pattern." Don't you think my subject might well have been "Avoid Too Much Pattern"?

A balance of large pieces of furniture across the room is desirable, and chairs must function for comfort. The "Era of Tables" is at hand, for there have never been so many.

Frocks for furniture have come to stay. They are prim enough to suit grandmother, made from the quilted oil calicos, and sprigged chintzes; or sophisticated enough for grand-daughter -- done in the modernistic mode.

Select pictures for story, sentiment, color; frame them quietly -- remember it is the picture, and not the frame you are showing. Hang pictures by two parallel wires; unless you do not mind driving a small nail into the wall and thus securing a blind hanging with the wires invisible. Wall hangings of tapestry, India prints, batik, block prints, or a yard or so of cretonne are very decorative. Pictures or wall hangings should be over a piece of furniture, or back of it -- not hanging in thin air -- but part of a group.

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This concludes the talk prepared by Mrs. Ness. By the way, there's a very good bulletin, called "Curtaining the Home," which contains a lot of good information about furnishing rooms. You may get this bulletin by sending ten cents to the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

Tomorrow: "Golden Rule Days," or "What School Opening Means to the Home."

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